



Aaron Diehl

THE BESPOKE MAN'S NARRATIVE—Mack Avenue Records MAC 1066. *Prologue; Generation Y; Blue Nude; Moonlight in Vermont; Single Petal of a Rose; The Cylinder; Stop and Go; Le Tombeau de Couperin (III. Forlane); Bess You is My Woman Now; Epilogue.*

PERSONNEL: Aaron Diehl, piano; David Wong, bass; Rodney Green, drums; Warren Wolf, vibraphone.

By Eric Harabadian

Although pianist Aaron Diehl is only 26 he's already got the chops and sophistication of those twice his age. He brings a wisdom and grace to his Klaveirhaus Fazioli grand piano that is elegant and exploratory, yet still rooted in a rich tradition of what came before.

The word “bespoke” in the album's title is an adjective, used in the fashion world that refers to custom made clothing signifying the person who designs or constructs them. Well, that description would certainly apply to Diehl and his quartet. This disc is a mix of original compositions and classic standards that were arranged specifically to suit this particular group. Diehl's debut works as, not only an unveiling to the public of his immense wealth of talent, but a sort of coming out affair for his ensemble as well.

Opening tunes “Prologue” and “Generation Y” are Diehl compositions and reflect a classic flavor right from the get-go. The pianist's

Ahmad Jamal-like block chords and intricate melodies envelope the listener in a warm and inviting manner. Vibist Warren Wolf is Diehl's perfect foil. Their seamless blend of harmonic and unison lines seems effortless and adds much depth to the overall group sound. “Blue Nude” is another Diehl piece that is an exercise in taste and restraint. This features lovely Errol Garner/Ellington-like expression, with exceptional drum interplay by Rodney Green. Speaking of the “Duke,” Ellington's “Single Petal of a Rose” is a sweet lullaby and delivered with tender loving care by the leader in a solo spot. Milt Jackson's “The Cylinder” is a prime example of what this group is all about. There is a very precise and mechanized way in which each band member interacts with the next. They integrate their respective parts in a funky call and response manner that really works. Another Diehl gem; “Stop and Go” burns in the form of a playful and spirited romp. Rapid fire chord progressions alternate with mid-tempo swing for a dynamic and exciting effect. Gershwin's “Bess, You is My Woman Now” is really special for Diehl's delicate and sensitive arrangement. The combination of David Wong's bowed bass matched with Green's superb brush technique and the leader's virtuoso playing is a showstopper.

Aaron Diehl and his quartet of young lions provide a wonderful and satisfying debut for jazz fans of every distinction. Not only is this “Bespoke Man's Narrative” custom fit for the artists that created it but it was designed for you—lovers of art and all things real—as well.

Vince Ector

ORGANATOMY – American Showplace Music www.vincentector.com. In A Sentimental Mood; Up & Down; Karen's Dance; Aries; Con Alma; I Don't Know; Jinrikisha; Organatomy; So Danço Samba.

PERSONNEL: Vince Ector, drums; Kyle Koehler, organ; Bruce Williams, saxophone; Yotam Silberstein, guitar; Claudio Roditi, trumpet; Café, percussion.

By Mark Keresman



Drummer and educator Vince Ector is yet another of those musicians you've likely heard and not been aware of it. Ector has plied his trade with Freddie Hubbard, Gloria Lynne, Charles Earland, Bobby Watson, Grover Washington Jr., Dr Lonnie Smith, George Cables, Melvin Sparks, Johnny Coles, and Shirley Scott, and he's played on recordings by Jimmy Bruno, Onaje Allan Gumbs and Charles Earland. He's even appeared on ABC television's *One Life to Live* daytime soap as – are you ready? – a musician. *Organatomy* is Ector's third CD as a leader and it's a veritable tribute to a different kind of Philly soul sound, the city's rich organ jazz tradition. Best of all, it doesn't yell “tribute” from the rooftops—it simply is what it is, another slice of hearty jazz du Philly.

Philadelphia has a massive tradition of jazz organists—Charles Earland, Jimmy McGriff, Joey De Francesco and his father Papa John, Shirley Scott, and Trudy Pitts make up a who's-who of that beefy/velvety-sounding axe. Whether or not Ector choose a fine an organist as Kyle Koehler as a way of connecting to a historical continuum is anyone's guess, but it sure hasn't hurt. Koehler's keyboard has a so dense of a texture that one can practically walk upon it—it has the nimble flow of the younger De Francesco and the BBQ sauce-funky sumptuousness of McGriff and Earland and a thickness that is truly unique. The set kicks off with a swaggering take on “In A Sentimental Mood,” with Bruce Williams' tart, lithe soprano darting and dancing over Koehler's classiness and Yotam Silberstein's tangy, Kenny Burrell-esque chords. They follow it up with an original mid-tempo bop swinger “Up & Down,” wherein Silberstein seeks and finds the little bit of Grant Green that lurks in nearly every jazz guitarist, while Williams wails with a touch of Joe Henderson's 1960s-era knottiness. Claudio Roditi adds his trumpet for the cooker that is “Karen's Dance,” another Ector original, contributing a nice Dizzy-ish muted solo. Throughout this piece, Ector has some the polyrhythmic approach of Art Blakey but with subtleness that amiably buoys the tune without drawing attention to itself. (In fact, Ector takes a rather self-effacing approach on the entire album.) The majestic “Aries” is by an organist that adopted Philly as his home, the late Don Paterson, and could well be a hit on some wise jazz-playing

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Joe Henderson's "Jinrikisha" is another mid-tempo cooker with some rippling, chunky, hard-swinging work from Silberstein and some fleet, slightly dramatic Koehler, Ector crackling like an autumn bonfire before making with some short, sweet, punchy solos. The title track has a loping, vaguely funky, sardonic, somewhat Steely Dan-like groove, with Ector's drums evoking a most happy fellow skipping down the street. Williams' sound, especially in unison with Silberstein, is big enough for a whole sax section. The closer makes a mad cooker from an Antonio Carlos Jobim melody, the whole band swinging until the proverbial cows come home to roost.

At the risk of sounding the press agent, the rollicking, immediate *Organatomy*—whether a tribute to Philly's organ "school" or not—is an album that could (and ought to) catapult Vince Ector to bigger and better things.



Kevin Eubanks

THE MESSENGER — Mack Avenue 1065. Mack Avenue Records, 18530 Mack Avenue #299, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236. www.mackavenue.com; www.kevineubanks.com. *The Messenger*; *Sister Veil*; *Resolution*; *JB*; *420*; *Led Boots*; *M.I.N.D.*; *Queen of Hearts*; *The Gloaming*; *Loved Ones*; *Ghost Dog Blues*.

PERSONNEL: Kevin Eubanks, acoustic and electric guitars; Billy Pierce, soprano and tenor saxophones; Rene Camacho, bass; Marvin "Smitty" Smith, drums; Robin Eubanks, trombone; Duane Eubanks, trumpet; Alvin Chea, vocals; Joey DeLeon Jr. congas and percussion.

The important thing is not the ingredients, but the way they're cooked. The cover sticker uses unlikely phrases ("rock-infused, blues-dipped") to avoid calling this fusion. No need; there's nothing offensive about this or in the music Kevin Eubanks culls from its vocabulary.

A taut bass snaps hard on "Resolution", handing off to Smitty Smith's laid-back beat. Kevin glides his way in, first with buzzy chords, then with soft-focus notes, bouncing some quiet funk. Come Billy Pierce's slippery tenor and you scratch your head: this is Coltrane's "Resolution", the second part of *A Love Supreme*, played as if it collided with James Brown's "Soul Power". Following this theme and a sweetly funky vamp, Pierce goes to work: a nervous hum, moving at right angles besides Eubanks' tart chords. Kevin's

own solo goes for slippery slides, pools of echo, and a rock vibe that hints both Trane and late-'Sixties Larry Coryell.

A Stax-like horn section forms the backdrop for "JB", whose bassline invokes Mr. Superbad. As brother Robin works a burly trombone, the guitar enters outer space: we hear spiraling echoes, odd wiggly noises, Peter Frampton talk-box effects — all linked to the movements of the horn. On trumpet, Duane Eubanks takes a simpler path, floating short phrases in weary tone. Behind him, Kevin mixes it up, switching between glowing chords and flashes of wah-wah.

As mood and song fade, a stronger one enters "420": as raw-toned strings mesh in a raga-like drone, Billy's soprano swoops, darting with swift speed and sad sound. Then the theme *erupts*: lots of horns, twisting Zappa-like lines, and guitars at full boil. Duane's muted strut works great in this bitches brew; like its predecessor, it exits fast before it wears out its welcome. "Led Boots" buries great snapping leads in an annoying wordless rap, while "The Messenger" gives you funk in smooth clothing. The strings keep rippling, drums and conga percolate swiftly ... and Pierce at his sweetest, most confident tone. This could work on mainstream radio — and it fits your stereo as well.

"M.I.N.D." begins with a Morse-code first, framed by straight-line horns — a pleasant theme in a cold environment. In time the mood remains as the details shift: Kevin draws slow arcs in the mode of Bill Frisell, as Billy's tenor acquires some grit. His bitter-edged solo takes little steps at quickening pace; nothing much happens but he sounds great doing it. On his turn Kevin tries harder, with mixed results: it's a bit long and the rock noodlings are too much for my taste, but there's some nice twang and the end-licks are tasty.

The ballad "Queen of Hearts" is a good deal: a slow swaying reed, with acoustic figures that sound like a kalimba ... or a music box. The theme is so simple it's barely there, but there's a mood, a warmth with touches of sadness ... and it's a nice place to be. Stick around for Robin's buttery solo, a sound big as an elephant and nearly as strong. Slower and better is "The Glowing", where Kevin's folkish strum meets Billy's dark-end-of-the-street moan. In time Pierce's tone becomes warmer, the pace slower, and the lonely mood becomes romantic. As this transpires Kevin holds his notes longer, and a thick harmonic blanket covers Pierce and the listener. And you'll want to snuggle.

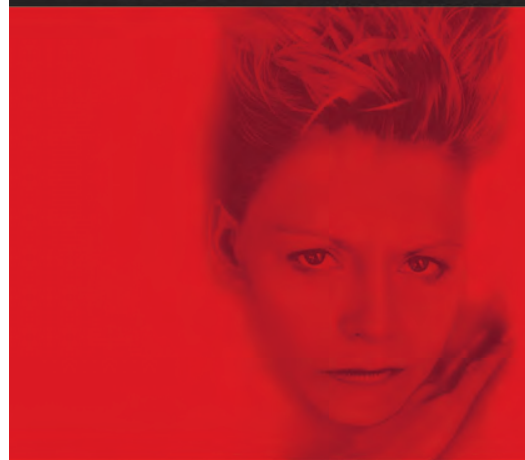
As good as the album's first half is, I'd likely have changed the programming; putting all the soft tunes together makes them seem alike. "Loved One" has much the same vibe of the last two selections, only this guitar is electric and Kevin plays alone. High notes drift atop an up-and-down counterpoint; curlicue phrases end in big chords and bigger echoes. This is like a country path or the first time you held someone's hand: the feeling is familiar even if the tune is not. And our finale is exactly what you want: a big rough-hewn



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